







**CALIFORNIA'S  
PIONEER  
ARTIST**

*Ernest Marjot*

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE CAREER OF A  
VERSATILE GENIUS



**ALBERT DRESSLER**

2263 GEARY STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

**1936**

*This brochure dedicated to California's  
State Library for furnishing the greater  
part of the data compiled herein.*



ALBERT DRESSLER

*Author of*

CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER CIRCUS  
CALIFORNIA'S CHINESE CHATTER  
CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER MOUNTAINEER  
EMPEROR NORTON OF UNITED STATES  
ETC.

## INTRODUCTION

By LOUISE NARJOT HOWARD

### ERNEST NARJOT — ARTIST \*

Name in full: Ernest Etienne Narjot de Franceville.

Place of birth: Saint Malo, France. Date: Dec. 25, 1826.

Father: Philippe Pierre Narjot de Franceville.

Mother: Madelaine Francoise Garnier.

If married, to whom? — Santos Ortiz.

Place: Matape, Sonora, Mexico. Date: Sept. 13, 1860.

Years spent in California: 1849-52; 1865-1898.

Residences in State: San Francisco and different mining camps—Yuba River, and others.

Place and Date of Death: San Francisco, August 24, 1898.

Where did the artist study: Paris, France.

Societies and clubs: San Francisco Art Association.

Honors received: Gold Medal, California State Agricultural Association, 1888; silver medal, California State Agricultural Association, 1889.

Titles of principal works; if exhibited, where; present location: Have no record of works sold. One in Irving Scott collection. The greater number left unsold were burned at the Art Association, San Francisco, April 18, 1906. The few saved are at present exhibited at the "White House," Rafael Weill Co., San Francisco. A few Indian scenes in this collection and "The Chinese Procession" Chinatown before the fire—"Druid's Sacrifice" and a few sketches, "Andromeda" Nude study. All mining scenes not sold were burned in San Francisco fire, 1906.

\* Information on file in the California State Library, being the biographical card signed by Louise Narjot Howard, daughter of Ernest Narjot.

# DEAN OF THE ARTISTS.



**ERNEST MARJOT, the Oldest California Painter,  
Who Died Yesterday.**

Above sketch taken from San Francisco Call, August 25, 1898.

# ERNEST NARJOT

*California's Pioneer Artist*

By ALBERT DRESSLER

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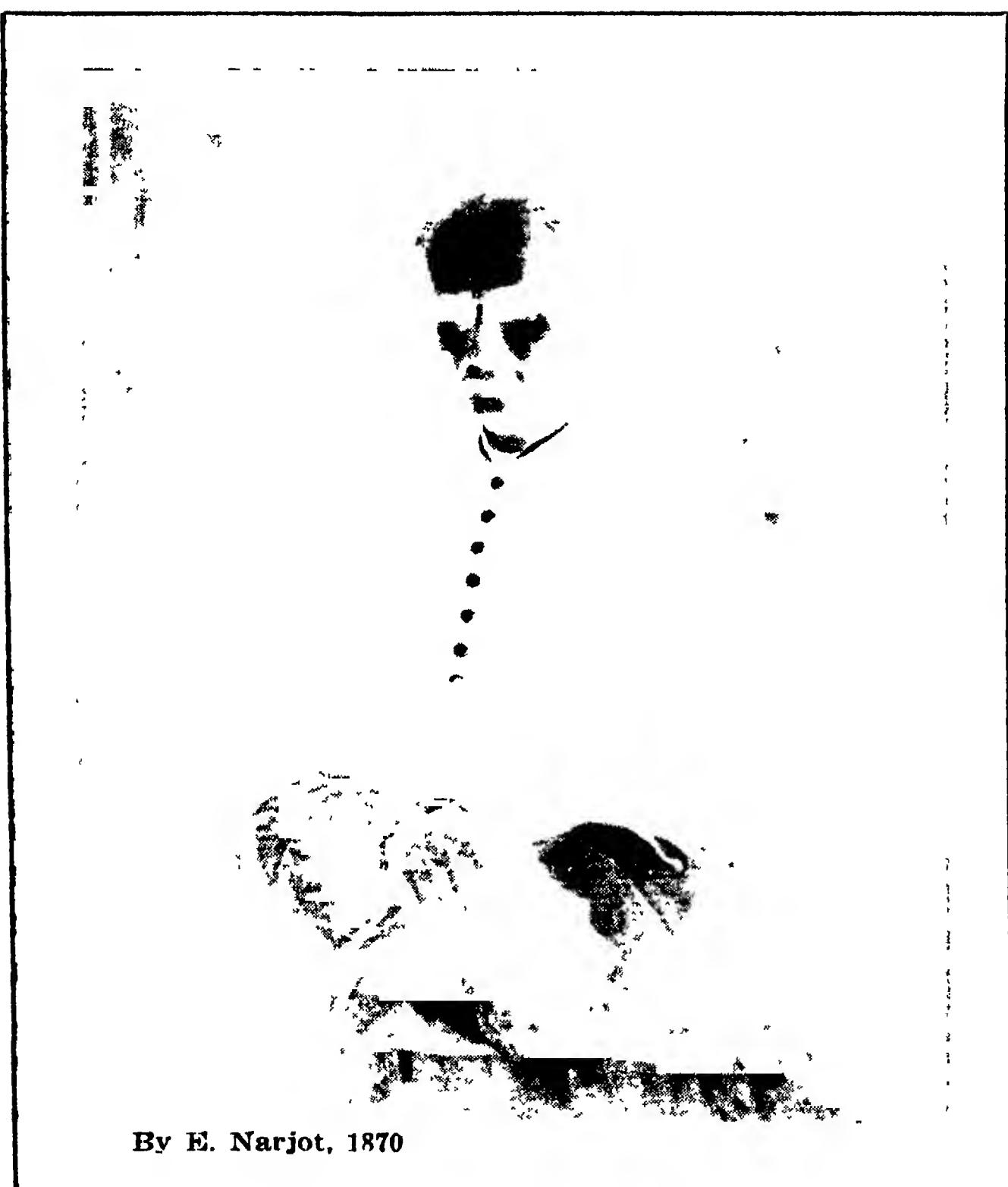
ERNEST NARJOT was born December 25, 1826, in Brittany, near St. Malo, France. He inherited his talent from his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Philippe Pierre Narjot de Franceville: Both loved to paint. Following in the footsteps of his ancestors who made a lasting reputation in the field of art, Narjot began his education at a Parisian school before he was 16 years of age. He devoted himself assiduously to his studies, and after reaching manhood, left his native country and came to California, making the voyage via Cape Horn and arriving in San Francisco in the latter part of 1849.

Narjot found only spasmodic work for his brush, as nearly every one's thoughts were centered on the accumulation of gold rather than the acquiring of paintings. Being thus unable to gain a good footing in his profession, and seized also perhaps for the time being, with the gold fever, Narjot joined a mining expedition in 1852 and went to new diggings in Mexico. His spare time, when not busy prospecting for the yellow metal, was devoted to his beloved painting. Narjot's pictures attracted the attention of art connoisseurs and he became very popular. In Matape, Sonora, Mexico he met a charming Senorita, by the name of Santos Ortiz, and the wedding bells rang out for them on September 13, 1860.

Mr. and Mrs. Narjot returned to San Francisco in 1865. Mr. Narjot devoted himself exclusively to his art. His studio was located at 621 Clay Street, where he quickly achieved added fame.

The following is an extract from the article "Art Beginnings on the Pacific," in the *OVERLAND MONTHLY*, August, 1868:

## CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER ARTIST



By E. Narjot, 1870

**MOST REV. JOSEPH SADOC ALEMANY, O. P. D. D.**

A native of Vich, Spain.

First Bishop of Monterey, 1850.

First Archbishop of San Francisco, 1855.

Resigned December, 1884.

Died in Valencia Spain, April 14, 1888.

## ERNEST NARJOT

"E. Narjot has produced many characteristic illustrations of border life and battle scenes in Mexico and Arizona, and a good portrait of Stella Bonheur. Others of our painters might take the hint from Nahl and Narjot of studying in the rich field of figure compositions afforded by the picturesque aboriginal and mixed races of this coast."

\* \* \*

Narjot did a great deal of portrait work, figures, landscapes and genre; as well as fresco work for churches, theatres, and public institutions. One of his best portraits was completed in the year 1870 of the widely known and much loved Archbishop Alemany of the Old St. Mary's Church erected in San Francisco in 1854. Narjot and the Archbishop were close friends but the artist could not persuade the modest Alemany to pose for him. Fortunately, Narjot had keen powers of observation, and on various occasions when the Archbishop officiated, he made it his custom to be present. In this manner he was able to photograph Alemany's likeness upon his memory, and then translate it faithfully to the canvas.

Narjot also made sketches and illustrations, twenty-four alone being found in the book entitled "A La California; Sketches of Life in the Golden State," by Col. Albert S. Evans and published in San Francisco, 1873.

Narjot often took trips throughout the state where he would use his brush, disposing of most of his paintings. He spent considerable time in the valleys and mountains, which afforded him scenery that he delighted placing on canvas. While practically all his paintings were noteworthy, he is said to have maintained that his outstanding creation was "The Sacrifice of a Druid Priestess" which he painted in 1881, measuring approximately three and one half by four feet.

Narjot, the pioneer painter of the Pacific Coast, reached perhaps the zenith of his fame when he was chosen to decorate the Leland Stanford tomb in the Stanford University grounds.

## CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER ARTIST

### AWARDS RECEIVED AT STATE FAIRS, 1888-1889

California State Fair, 1888. Premiums awarded. . . . Art Department: . . . Most meritorious display of oil paintings—E. Narjot, San Francisco, gold medal.

From Sacramento Daily Record Union, Sept. 14, 1888

Premium list. . . . Awards in Art Department in addition to gold and silver medals already published. . . . E. Narjot \$45.

From Sacramento Daily Record-Union, Sept. 15, 1888

Additional premiums. . . . Seventh Department—E. Narjot, San Francisco, Art Department.

From Sacramento Daily Record Union, Sept. 17, 1888

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California State Fair, 1889. Review of the art treasures in the Pavilion. . . . No. 97. "Miggles," by Narjot, is a large and effective work. The story is one of Bret Harte's early sketches of pioneer life in the California mountains, and expresses the tender devotion of an unlettered girl of that period to an old friend who is wasting away with disease. It is a pathetic tale expressed in a poetic manner by an accomplished painter. Narjot has several other works, all conscientiously rendered, but that we are compelled to pass. . . .

From Sacramento Union, Sept. 15, 1889

Prize Winners. Seventh Department. Class 1—oil paintings, etc. . . . E. Narjot, San Francisco, 6 oil paintings, silver medal and \$40.

From Sacramento Bee, Sept. 20, 1889

## ERNEST NARJOT

From the San Francisco Call, Sunday, January 28, 1894

### A PATHETIC CASE

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ERNEST NARJOT AS HE IS TODAY  
THINKS ONLY OF THE PAST

PECULIAR PLIGHT OF A WELL-KNOWN  
PAINTER, NOW ALMOST FORGOTTEN  
BY HIS FRIENDS

WHAT HAS BECOME of the painter, Ernest Narjot? is a question people interested in art have asked over and over again. Few have received any answer, for not many people know anything about the man who was one of the first artists to arrive in California, except that he had disappeared and his collection of pictures also.

All that is generally known about the old man's latter years is that when he was decorating the Stanford tomb at Palo Alto, paint got in his eyes and produced a sort of blindness that was continuously getting worse. Pictures came from his brush at long intervals, and the story was discredited, so that few people paid attention to the old painter's movements.

Attention has been lately attracted to him by a couple of pictures which he sent in for exhibition at the Midwinter Fair, and people asked, "Where is Ernest Narjot?"

It was not an easy matter to find him, as he had moved from one part of San Francisco to another and left no address, or, if he did, the people had forgotten it. After much search by a Call reporter, the old man and his family were found in a small tenement house at 1322 Vallejo Street, and the way he passes his days is pathetic and remarkable.

## CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER ARTIST

To him events of the world are only vague dreams, and his reality is made up of memories. He does not know his real condition, and, indeed, anybody who knew Ernest Narjot a few years ago would wonder if he were the man.

His home is a most humble one, shared by his daughter and grandchildren, while his affectionate and faithful wife does her best to provide for the little family by disposing of some of the pictures her husband painted at different times in his life. This is a most difficult task for the devoted woman, as she speaks English poorly, and she has a very limited knowledge of business.

What she has been through in the last few years has caused almost as great suffering as her husband's affliction, which was so painful as to be described only by the word *agony*.

Mrs. Narjot describes her trials vividly, occasionally showing her emotion by a slight tremor of her lip.

She remembers the day when he came home sick from Palo Alto, after finishing the ceiling in the Stanford tomb. He did not think that it was more than a severe cold, and the little pain in his eyes he set down as trivial. But the doctors shook their heads and said Mr. Narjot was a very sick man and might lose the use of his eyes entirely.

Then came a long period of nursing, as the sick man's eyes were operated on daily for months and needed constant attention. But it was not so bad since there was money on hand to buy him what he needed and his brain had not shown the least sign of being affected. The doctors at last announced that only one eye could be saved. Even this was good news and for a short time Ernest Narjot occasionally appeared among his friends and was able to talk. His acquired languages are gradually leaving him, and only his mother tongue, French, is of any real use to him.

## ERNEST NARJOT

People used to like his other pictures, he says, but they are not as good as some that he is going to do. Oh, no, he is going to paint the grandest pictures of his life pretty soon.

Of his past work he always speaks of a certain picture, representing the sacrifice of a Druid priestess. He says he did his best on that, but it is nothing to what he is going to do. Such trees as he will paint, and what life and motion he will put in his horses!

And so it goes on day by day. As his power of execution leaves him, his enthusiastic love for art seems to increase. What the end will be can only be conjectured. Physicians hold out no hope for the return of his powers.

Ernest Narjot was born in Brittany in 1827 and studied art in the best schools to be found in Paris as soon as he was old enough. When the gold fever broke out in California, he made up his mind to come here as soon as possible. He took a sailing ship from St. Malo, near his home, and arrived on this coast some time in 1850.

He studied here a few years, but as the gold excitement cooled off, he concluded to go to Sonora, Mexico, where new diggings were discovered. He remained in that country, working at mining for several years, but never losing an opportunity to do something with his art. It was while there that he acquired a love for the country and people that he has since put on canvas and made himself famous.

When the trouble with France came, Ernest and his family had to flee for their lives, and eventually arrived in San Francisco, where the best work of his life has been done.

Ernest Narjot was one of the first members of the Art Association, and during his membership the most regular contributor to the annual exhibitions.

## CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER ARTIST

Ernest Narjot's pictures may have many points which would be condemned by the more modern painters, but it is certain that no man on the Pacific Coast has made a stronger attempt to truthfully depict the country life and habits of the people. With a strong instinct of the picturesque, when combined with life and movement, he put on canvas scenes of an era that has passed away and for the perpetuation of those lost, his pictures will have a value that will entitle him to a place in the front rank among the early painters of California.

Ernest Narjot comes of a family of painters, many of whom have made lasting reputation. All were like him and painted because they loved it. His father and mother both painted, as did also his cousin on his father's side, who, when his country needed him, took command of a man-of-war to such a good result that his name is now famous in French history.

There are a large number of pictures by Ernest Narjot in the storeroom of the Aid association that Mrs. Narjot is making an effort to have exhibited and sold, so as to provide comfort for the man who painted them now needs it so badly.

— End of Newspaper Article —

ERNEST NARJOT



By E. Narjot, 1888

NEW YEAR'S FESTIVAL IN CHINATOWN,  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

## CALIFORNIA'S PIONEER ARTIST

### NARJOT LOSES EYESIGHT

**O**VERCOME WITH BLINDNESS and destitution, his artist friends came to his aid in the early part of January, 1897, each one contributing a sketch or painting. These were placed on sale in Hopkins Institute, on Nob Hill, San Francisco, for the benefit of the stricken painter and his family. Among the thirty prominent artists who came to Narjot's assistance were: William Keith, Thomas Hill, Arthur Mathews, and Amadel Joullin.

### LIFE'S DIVIDE REACHED

Ernest Narjot expired on August 24, 1898, aged 71, leaving behind a wife, two daughters, and a son.

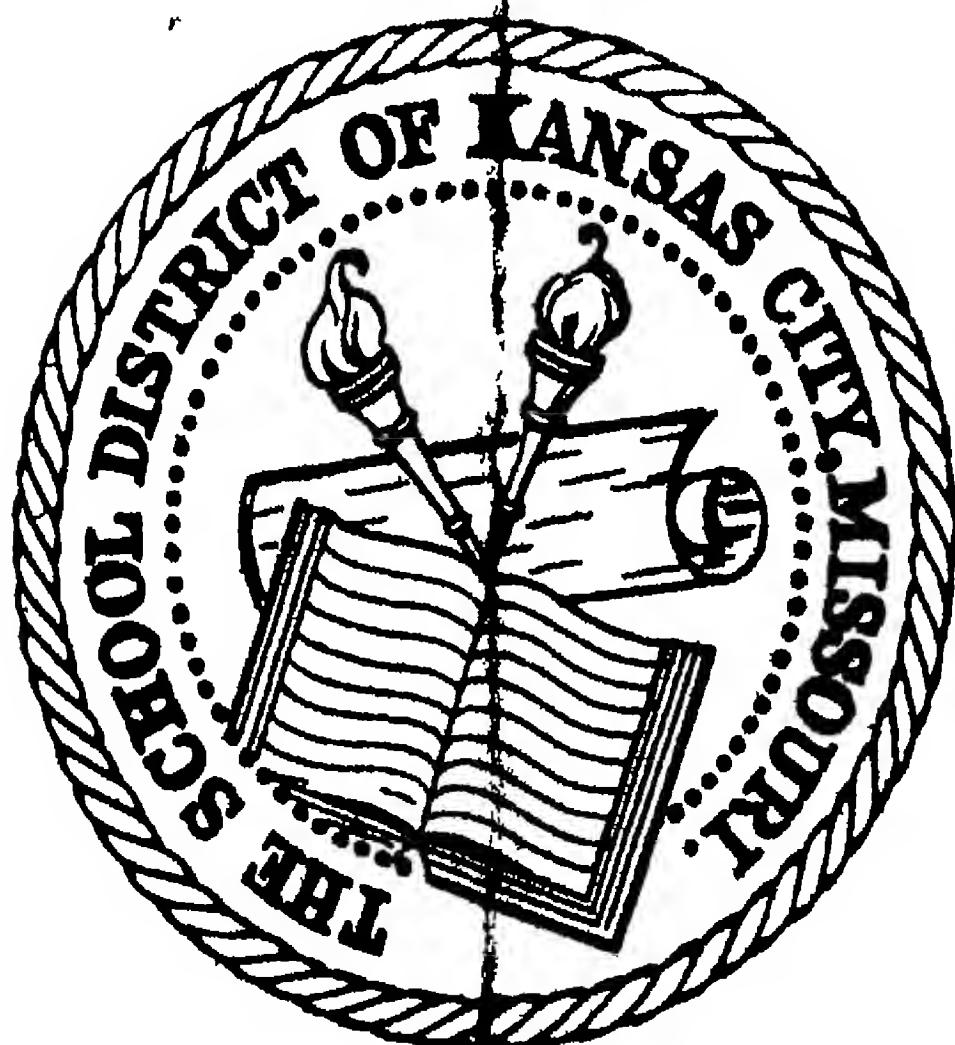
The spirit of such a master painter's work could never be obliterated, even if resting for the time being in oblivion. And thus, after many years, several of his paintings, including "Cupid and His Pupils," "Making Tortillas," and his "Druid" masterpiece have been located. Considerable difficulty, however, has been experienced in tracing his other outstanding paintings believed to be still in existence. Two are hanging in the Galleries of the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, and the Archbishop Alemany portrait and "New Year's Festival in Chinatown," pictured in this brochure, are privately owned.

This is indeed providential in view of the fact that so many of his paintings were destroyed in the big fire of 1906. Even in the later rebuilding of the Stanford tomb, naught remains of Narjot's work. The information herein conveyed will no doubt stimulate alert collectors of fine paintings to scour the country in the hope of uncovering more of the illustrious creations of Narjot.



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